

Preaching that Pleases God

(1 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

by Bryan Gibson

I started preaching about 28 years ago, and since that time I have relied heavily on the following passage. Read it carefully, and then look at the important lessons taught within.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12: For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. (2) But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. (3) For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. (4) But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. (5) For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. (6) Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. (7) But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. (8) So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (9) For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. (10) You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; (11) as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, (12) that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

The Content of our Teaching

No surprise here, it's "the gospel of God" (vv. 2, 8, 9). Sermons that feature just a little gospel and a whole lot of something else—they may please some people, but they won't build faith and they won't save souls.

The Motive Behind our Teaching

We should never preach in order to please men (v. 4), or to gain glory for ourselves (v. 6). If either is our motive, we will eventually compromise the truth, and we just can't let that happen. It's not money we're after either (v. 5), but souls (v. 8). We preach in order to please God (v. 4), and what keeps us going is the longing we have for the souls of others (v. 8).

The Manner of our Teaching

Balance is the key. We must be bold (v. 2), because the truth won't always be popular. The delicate nature of some souls may require us to be "gentle...just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (v. 7). Other situations call for more firmness, "as a father does his own children" (v. 11). Sometimes we need to exhort, sometimes we

need to comfort, and sometimes we need to charge (v. 11). The faithful preacher always strives to find the proper balance.

Our Conduct

Teaching is accomplished both by word and by deed, and so we should behave “devoutly and justly and blamelessly” (v. 10).

Our Reward

What a joy to see those whom we have taught “walk worthy of God” (v. 12), and an even greater joy for them to be “in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming” (v. 19).